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SUBJECT: NOMINATION FOR IQBAL MASIH AWARD) MEXICO
REF: STATE 120132

Embassy Mexico City hereby nominates the CROC (Revolutionary Confederation of Workers and Farmers), Mexican labor federation for the Iqbal Masih award in recognition of its efforts to reduce the worst forms of child labor. The following information is keyed to paragraph 9 of Reftel:

A) Name: CROC -- Revolutionary Confederation of Workers and Farmers

B) Address: Hamburgo No. 250
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C) Executive Summary: The CROC is the third largest private sector labor federation in Mexico. It has affiliate unions across the full spectrum of Mexico,s private sector but it is best known for its strong presence in the businesses that make up the country,s tourist industry. The most important of these elements, with respect to this nomination, are in the areas of hotels, restaurants and ground transportation (specifically taxi cab companies). CROC affiliated unions are the dominate labor organizations in Mexico,s Yucatan peninsula often referred to as the &Rivera Maya8. This region contains the internationally renowned tourist areas of Cancun, Playa del Carmen and the Island of Cozumel. The CROC is also very strong in many of Mexico,s other tourist locations such as Cabo San Lucas and other places along the country,s pacific coast.

As a labor organization the CROC prides itself on having adopted a philosophy it calls &social unionism8. This philosophy recognizes that workers are only on their jobs eight hours a day and that during the remaining 16 hours they were ordinary citizens concerned for the welfare of Mexico. The CROC,s idea of &social unionism8 has many components but one of its main elements is an ongoing initiative to combat the worst forms of child labor in Mexico,s tourist industry.

According to the &Infantia Foundation8 a Mexican NGO that focuses on children,s issues, in the last five years a half million children and adolescents have formally been reported as missing in Mexico and that only 20 per cent of these children have ever been found. Partly as a result of this, an NGO spokesperson said, an internet search for the phrase &sexual paradise8 would show that Mexico is now rated number three worldwide in terms of this form of abusive child labor.

Because of its philosophy of social unionism the CROC is very aware of the problem of sexual tourism in Mexico and long ago

decided to do something about this situation. Since the CROC,s membership is heavily represented in Mexico,s hotel and restaurants industries the union realized that they have an excellent vantage point from which to fight against this form of child labor. Consequently, the CROC undertook the responsibility of training its members so that they could begin to do something about the problem of children in the commercial sex trade.

What the CROC is doing is holding an ongoing series of seminars to education volunteer union members about the extent of this form of child labor and what they can do to combat it. These volunteers ultimately serve as trainers for their co-workers in their respective places of employment. The volunteers are taught how to spot and how to report suspected incidents of child exploitation to the proper authorities in such a way as to ensure an appropriate response from local law enforcement authorities since Mexican law is very specific as to who can report these types of incidents and under what circumstances before the police are allowed/obligated to investigate the suspected crime.

In organizing these seminars the CROC has obtained assistance from the GOM,s Secretariat of Labor, the International Labor Organization (ILO), the Inter-American Regional Labor Organization (ORIT), the DIF (the national family/child welfare agency), UNICEF and COPARMEX (a national private sector employers association roughly comparable to the US Chamber of Commerce). Since 2006, and with the cooperation of these national and international organizations, the CROC has trained approximately 500 volunteers capable of training other union members in the procedures on how to stop and how properly report suspected incidents of the worst forms of child labor in Mexico,s tourism industry.

Taking on the task of combating this form of child labor is not something that the CROC was in any way compelled to do. Nevertheless it has fully committed itself to this undertaking and has obtained important assistance in this endeavor from both national and international organizations. An initiative of this type can and is making a difference here in Mexico. Winning the recognition that the Iqbal Masih award represents would do a great deal to help the CROC gain the support of other organizations and perhaps even governmental agencies in the ongoing challenge to one day eliminate this form of child labor.

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